The Sun.
BOOKS AND THE BOOK WORLD

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ON A DEAD MOTH.

By David Morton.

WHO knows what trouble trembled in that throat,
What sweet distraction for the summer moon,
That lured you out, a frail, careering boat,
Across the midnight's purple, deep lagoon!
Some fire of madness lit that tiny brain,
Some soft propulsion clouded through your breast
And lifted you, a white and moving stain,
Against the dark of that disastrous quest.

The sadness of all brief and lovely things,
The fine and futile passions that we bear,
Haunts the bright wreck of your too fragile wings
And wins a pity for you, ended there—
Like us, hurled backward to the final shade,
From mad adventures for a moon or maid.

A MIDWINTER BOOK SEASON.

THE American Booksellers Association and the *Publishers Weekly*, both valiant front rank warriors in the recent Children's Book Week campaign, have sounded a call for a "general drive on books and reading," to be called the Midwinter Book Season, beginning January 19 and continuing to February 28. To this call publishers, retail booksellers and undoubtedly librarians are responding. The American Library Association, as readers of *Books and the Book World* know, is now starting, through periodicals of all kinds, a four months' publicity campaign for books and reading.

The following extracts from a letter received from Frederick G. Melcher, secretary of the American Booksellers Association, will give an idea of the "drive's" objective:

"To the Editor of *Books and the Book World*
—*Sir:* The Midwinter Book Season plan has been started by a group interested in American publishing and distribution to do something to fill up the gap in book production that has always existed between Christmas and the spring season.

"While December is the great month for buying books for others, January and February are the best months for personal home reading, and yet the publishers and the book trade have never taken full advantage of this. By centring on the problem the attention of all those interested in books it is going to be possible to better this condition and the publishers are unanimous in believing that the plan is an excellent one."

The *Publishers Weekly* has circulated a letter to the publishers suggesting that "many conditions seem to be working together just now to make the first months of the year extremely important to publishers and full of possibilities to the retailers," and that the proposed Midwinter Book Season will be an effective way of taking advantage of the possibilities.

If that is the case *Books and the Book World* is heartily in favor of the "drive." The slogan will be "Give a Thought to Books." We are for giving a thought to books, and if possible two thoughts or even more, every day of every week of every season on the calendar, and if we can judge our readers correctly by the letters that they write to us most of them feel about it just as we do.

But if the publishers and the retailers, who know their business and the ultimate book consumer, believe that said consumer can be persuaded to consume with unwonted voracity between January 19 and February 28, more power to their several elbows!

DEFINITION OF A GOOD BOOK.

IT has been rediscovered this last year that Theodore Roosevelt was a phenomenal reader; and that books he liked had such variety as to make his reading, within a few sharp limitations characteristic of his qualities, virtually omnivorous. And it has become the fashion, a good, sound fashion, too, to quote what he had to say of books and reading. Looking through the excellent new edition of the *Autobiography* (Scribner's) we came upon this paragraph. It bears quoting once again:

"I could not name any principle upon which the (his) books have been gathered. Books are almost as individual as friends. Some meet the needs of one person, and some of another; and each person should beware of the booklover's besetting sin, of what Mr. Edgar Allan Poe calls 'the mad pride of intellectuality,' taking the shape of arrogant pity for the man who does not like the same kind of books. Of course there are books which a man or woman uses as instruments of a profession—law books, medical books, cookery books, and the like. I am not speaking of these, for they are not properly 'books' at all; they come in the category of time tables, telephone directories and other useful agencies of civilized life. I am speaking of books that are meant to be read. Personally, granted that these books are decent and healthy, the one test to which I demand that they all submit is that of being interesting. If the book is not interesting to the reader, then in all but an infinitesimal number of cases it gives scant benefit to the reader. Of course any reader ought to cultivate his or her taste so that good books will appeal to it, and that trash won't. But after this point has once been reached the needs of each reader must be met in a fashion that will appeal to those needs. Personally the books by which I have profited infinitely more than by any others have been those in which profit was a by-product of the pleasure; that is, I read them because I enjoyed them, because I liked reading them, and the profit came in as part of the enjoyment."

This is no gazer's crystal in which to behold a new revelation on the subject. But it is no bad compass by which to lay one's course in forming one's library—or in conducting *Books and the Book World* of The Sun! In fact, if the boys of our own boyhood's brigade who were going to grow up to be like "Teddy" have measurably succeeded in this particular, they and theirs are the readers for whom we are working.

"SOUR GRAPES AND ASHES."

London, Jan. 9.—Daisy Ashford, who wrote *The Young Visiters* at the age of 9, was married secretly yesterday to James Devlin, a farmer.—The Sun.

WHAT are these cabled tidings? O too happy
Farmers, as Virgil once correctly said;
For one is this confounded Devlin chap. He
Has gone and wed

Daisy in secret. Now the world will never
Know if she swooned when Bernard (James)
proposed.
No matter. Seldom may his Queen, if ever,
Be indisposed!

Queen in good right, if constitutes a queen a
Royalty such as flows to Mrs. Jim
From umpty-million copies of Salteena.
We feel for him,

Feel crushed, dispriz'd, as Ethel Montieue did
Him ere he took to having "five of each,"
Since she whose book we loved, James, more than
you did
Is out of reach.

But, courage!—Jim, here's wishing your life may be
Bliss, and your harvests all of Ceres blest;
And wishing her that "darling little baby
Calf," and the rest!

THE ILLNESS OF BLISS CARMAN.

AT this writing, the latest report we can get of the condition of Mr. Carman is a week old. It is not reassuring. But even though Mr. Carman is now in his sixtieth year, a setback such as friends have heard he experienced last week need not foreshadow a calamitous outcome. He was reported improving until it occurred. Americans who value poetry and know their acknowledged living poets will, in fact do, unite in hoping again to hear of his improvement, and as early as may be in the nature of the disease from which he is suffering, of his recovery.

They already know, thanks largely to an article which appeared in The Sun November 23, that the author of *Low Tide On Grand Pré* and the *Songs from Vagabondia* is at Saranac. Indeed, this newspaper, with a notice published in its daily news columns, had originally smitten the rock—not, after all, so flinty as it is often represented—of the people's indifference to the whereabouts and welfare of a poet. The result was a gush of sympathy and inquiry; other hands at once powerfully assisted in conveying the word of Mr. Carman's predicament; and now the solicitude is national.

I CANNOT PUT YOU AWAY.

By Herbert S. Gorman.

I CANNOT put you away;
By night and day
You come in a dream and cry,
"It is I! It is I!"

I will rise and turn the lock
Nor heed your knock,
But rest for a night and day
With you away.

And then I will find release
And empty peace
In silence that will not cry
"It is I! It is I!"

Through Library Windows

THE WORLD OF WONDER.

TO David Christie-Murray a new book of Meredith always came like a hamper of noble wine. "I know the vintages," said he, "and I rejoice." With a passion almost idolatrous Murray proceeds to open the hamper, "corded and wired in the most exasperating way," and adds that in any book of Meredith's he has a cellarful for a lifetime.

The rest of us are but infrequently cheered, perhaps, and very seldom inebriated by Richard, Diana and Sir Willoughby, though I find that one of the many copies of *Diana* which are used in the Syracuse library made fourteen visits to the homes of readers during 1919. *The Egoist*, though by no means as popular, is in steady use, like *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*—more frequently recommended, I suppose, than either.

* * *

Less alcoholic, though not less intoxicating, is Taine's reference to Chaucer, "like a jeweller with his hands full: pearls and glass beads, sparkling diamonds and common agates, black jet and ruby roses, all that history and imagination had been able to gather and fashion during three centuries in the East, in France, in Wales, in Provence, in Italy, all that had rolled his way, clashed together, broken or polished by the stream of centuries, and by the great jumble of human memory; he holds it in his hand, arranges it, composes therefrom a long sparkling ornament, with twenty pendants, a thousand facets." A wonderful passage, worth its place in literature for its own sake, whether it lead to the reading of Chaucer or not.

The college students are still reading Chaucer in our town; hardly anybody else, apparently.

Lowell's excellent advertising has not reached our public library patrons of the present day so far as Chaucer is concerned.

> Vernal Chaucer, whose deep woods
> Throb thick with merle and mavis all the year.

Such was Lowell's recommendation. "I take my May down from the happy shelf," said he, as he held the *Canterbury Tales* in his hand. Chaucer remains upon the shelf, generally speaking, except where the stern compulsion of the English department brings him down. He is not dead, however. For an example of a dead poet we must turn to William Shenstone and his *Moral Pieces*. Martin Farquhar Tupper, D. C. L., F. R. S., is another example. Five good copies of his works, one entitled *Gems Compiled by a Clergyman*, are on the shelves. One of them has been borrowed once since 1916.

* * *

When we were compiling the Roosevelt Number of our bulletin with the lists of books by Roosevelt, books about Roosevelt and books Roosevelt loved, it seemed to those who were reading the Colonel's writings that it was like walking down a great highway through varied scenery, jungle, battlefield, city street, and passing every now and then a gateway opening into Somewhere Else. Over the gateways we could see the names of Dickens, Macaulay, Uncle Remus, Laura E. Richards, Tolstoy and many and divers others less well known. It seemed to us library friends of Roosevelt that it was in opening these gateways that the Colonel rendered his best service to the cause of free reading.

"By the time you have finished," says the Roosevelt Number, "you have either resolved to build up a library of your own or to go to the nearest public library and demand your rights as one of the Roosevelt disciples of good reading."

* * *

No one expects George Meredith to become popular. But to those who can read Meredith and profit by it we who have read and profited owe a special obligation.

"All of us," says Walter Eaton, speaking about the responsibilities of public librarians, "can remember, no doubt, those magic days of youth when we stood silent upon a peak in Darien and for the first time saw the vast Pacific of ideal loveliness. They are days to live for, and those who have never experienced them have quite missed, I think, the highest joy a book can give. Were I a librarian I should rather watch one boy or girl going out with Keats than ninety and nine going out with Robert W. Chambers."

What he means is that an exceptional duty is owing to the exceptional person. "To persuade some woman about to take out a new book to take out an old one; to introduce a farmer lad to Richard Jeffries or Thoreau; to open before the eyes of some mute, inglorious author, struggling with the problem of expression, the pages of Poe and De Quincey and Pater and Arnold, to keep alive and throbbing in the library the great and high tradition of literature and beauty."

Such a spirit would make of the library "for a few at any rate, and probably to far more than we suspect, a magic casement opening on the world of wonder."

Paul M. Paine.